

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF DELAWARE

EATON CORPORATION,)
)
 Plaintiff,)
)
 v.) C.A. No. 00-751-SLR
)
PARKER-HANNIFIN)
CORPORATION,)
)
 Defendant.)

MEMORANDUM ORDER

At Wilmington this 10th day of January, 2003, having heard oral argument and having reviewed the papers submitted in connection therewith;

IT IS ORDERED that the disputed claim language in United States Patent Nos. 5,226,682, 5,553,895 and 5,570,910, as identified by the above referenced parties, shall be construed as follows, consistent with the tenets of claim construction set forth by the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit:

A. The '682 Patent

1. **"Annular locking means."** This limitation is not a means plus function limitation.¹ Therefore, "annular locking

¹In the claim language, the patentee uses the term "means" and recites a function, "locking," which is sufficient to raise a presumption that the limitation is a means plus function limitation under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 6 . Envirco Corp. v. Clestra Cleanroom, Inc., 209 F.3d 1360, 1364 (Fed. Cir. 2000). However, the inquiry does not end there. This presumption may be rebutted if the claim itself recites sufficient structure to perform the

means" shall be construed to mean a "ring-shaped locking device."

2. **"Coupling assembly."** These terms shall be construed with their ordinary meaning, no further construction is necessary.

3. **"Two members."** These terms shall be construed with their ordinary meaning, no further construction is necessary.

4. **"First member."** Consistent with the specification and the claims, "first member" shall mean the male member of the two member coupling assembly.

5. **"Ridge."** This term shall be construed with its ordinary meaning, no further construction is necessary.

6. **"Ramp."** This term shall be construed with its ordinary meaning, no further construction is necessary.

7. **"Apex."** Consistent with the specification and the

claimed function. Id. The definition of "annular" is "forming or shaped like a ring." The American Heritage Dictionary 112, (2d ed. 1982). Because the term "annular" itself imparts structure, i.e., a ring-shaped object, the presumption that the limitation is a means plus function limitation is rebutted.

Plaintiff also argues that "annular locking means" should be defined as "a ring having two spaced apart ends." This argument must also fail since dependent claim 8 claims "the coupling assembly of claim 7, wherein said annular locking means is a ring having two spaced apart ends." Construing the limitation "annular locking means" in claim 7 as plaintiff suggests would render claim 8 meaningless. Furthermore, nowhere in the specification does plaintiff state or suggest that the only suitable annular locking means is a ring having two spaced apart ends. Rather, the specification states "[i]n the present embodiment, the ring includes a space between ends...." ('682 patent, col. 2, ll. 47-49)

claims, "apex" shall mean "the uppermost surface of the ramp and may be pointed, radiused, cylindrical or flat."

8. **"Shoulder."** This term shall be construed with its ordinary meaning, no further construction is necessary.

9. **"Second member."** Consistent with the specification and the claims, "second member" shall mean the female member of the two member coupling assembly.

10. **"Cavity."** This term shall be construed with its ordinary meaning, no further construction is necessary.

11. **"Chamfer."** Absent any definition in the specification or claims, "chamfer" shall be given its ordinary meaning. Therefore, a "chamfer" is an "inclined surface."

12. **"A chamfer adjacent to said cavity."** Consistent with the specification and claims, "adjacent to" shall be given its ordinary dictionary meaning. Therefore, "a chamfer adjacent to said cavity" shall mean "a chamfer close to, next to, or adjoining said cavity."²

13. **"Release sleeve movably mounted on said exterior surface of said first member."** Consistent with the specification

²Defendant argues that plaintiff's definition is incorrect because Figures 7-9 of the '682 patent show a chamfer next to or adjoining the cavity. Absent any limiting language in the specification or claims, however, a patentee is not limited to the embodiments shown in the figures.

and claims, "mounted" shall be given its ordinary meaning.³ Therefore, "release sleeve movably mounted on said exterior surface of said first member" shall mean "release sleeve movably and securely affixed to said exterior surface of said first member."

14. **"Locking means travels ... to engage said ridge, said cavity and said chamfer."** The term "engage" shall be given its ordinary dictionary meaning "to interlock or cause to interlock."⁴

B. The '895 Patent

1. **"Coupling assembly."** These terms shall be construed with their ordinary meaning, no further construction is necessary.

2. **"Two members."** These terms shall be construed with their ordinary meaning, no further construction is necessary.

3. **"First member."** Consistent with the specification and the claims, "first member" shall mean the male member of the two member coupling assembly.

4. **"Second member."** Consistent with the specification and the claims, "second member" shall mean the female member of the two member coupling assembly.

³The verb "to mount" is defined as "to fix securely to a support." The American Heritage Dictionary 817, (2d ed. 1982).

⁴The American Heritage Dictionary 454, (2d ed. 1982).

5. **"Groove."** Consistent with the specification and claims, "groove" shall be given its ordinary dictionary meaning. Therefore, "groove" shall mean "a narrow furrow or channel."⁵

6. **"Chamfer."** Absent any definition in the specification or claims, "chamfer" shall be given its ordinary meaning. Therefore, a "chamfer" is an "inclined surface."

7. **"Engage."** The term "engage" shall be given its ordinary dictionary meaning "to interlock or cause to interlock."

8. **"Release sleeve movably mounted on said exterior surface of said first member."** Consistent with the specification and claims, "mounted" shall be given its ordinary meaning. Therefore, "release sleeve movably mounted on said exterior surface of said first member" shall mean "release sleeve movably and securely affixed to said exterior surface of said first member."

9. **"A release sleeve encircling said second cylindrical surface."** The term "encircling" shall be given its ordinary dictionary meaning "to form a circle around or surround."⁶

10. **"Collar"** This term shall be construed with its ordinary dictionary meaning, therefore "collar" shall mean "any of various ringlike devices used to limit, guide, or secure a

⁵The American Heritage Dictionary 578, (2d ed. 1982).

⁶The American Heritage Dictionary 451, (2d ed. 1982).

machine part.”⁷

C. The '910 Patent

1. **“Coupling assembly.”** These terms shall be construed with their ordinary meaning, no further construction is necessary.

2. **“Two members.”** These terms shall be construed with their ordinary meaning, no further construction is necessary.

3. **“First member.”** Consistent with the specification and the claims, “first member” shall mean the male member of the two member coupling assembly.

4. **“Second member.”** Consistent with the specification and the claims, “second member” shall mean the female member of the two member coupling assembly.

5. **“Groove.”** Consistent with the specification and claims, “groove” shall be given its ordinary dictionary meaning. Therefore, “groove” shall mean “a narrow furrow or channel.”

6. **“Said retaining groove adjoining said receiving**

⁷The American Heritage Dictionary 291, (2d ed. 1982). The patent specification is quite confusing and contradictory when discussing the “collar” component of the invention. At col. 6, l. 64, the patentee first introduces “a crimped collar 82.” However, at col. 6, l. 65, and col. 7, ll. 2-4, the patentee proceeds to discuss another “collar 78.” Most confusing, however, is that the patentee previously introduced component 78 as an “annular rib 78” or “rib 78.” Col. 6, ll. 61-62. Similarly unclear, the patentee uses the term rib without a label or definition throughout the patent. See e.g., col. 2, l. 28; col. 3, l. 52; col. 6, l. 10.

groove." Consistent with the specification and claims, "adjoin" shall be given its ordinary dictionary meaning. Therefore, "adjoin" shall mean "to be next to; be contiguous to."⁸

7. **"Engage."** The term "engage" shall be given its ordinary dictionary meaning "to interlock or cause to interlock."

8. **"A release sleeve movably mounted adjacent said exterior surface of said first member."** Consistent with the specification and claims, "mounted" shall be given its ordinary meaning. Therefore, "release sleeve movably mounted adjacent said exterior surface of said first member" shall mean "release sleeve movably and securely affixed adjacent said exterior surface of said first member."

Sue L. Robinson
United States District Judge

⁸The American Heritage Dictionary 79, (2d ed. 1982).